



Representative Bobby Levy

Serving Umatilla, Union & Wallowa Counties

Chair Broadman, Vice-McLane, and members of the committee,

I'm writing today in support of HB 4134.

Everyone will have a different reason for supporting HB 4134, and mine is this: I have spent my entire political career advocating for smart, efficient, and flexible ways to manage our wolf population. HB 4134 will finally provide a stable funding source for the Oregon's Wolf Management Compensation and Proactive Trust Fund.

For those of us who grew up and around Eastern Oregon, wolf management is not theoretical. It is a daily reality where more often than not, ranchers have their hands tied behind their backs while they try to keep their herds healthy and safe. Many of these ranchers are great stewards of the land, regularly participate in nonlethal deterrence programs and have worked collaboratively with ODFW and local officials. But when a confirmed depredation occurs—when calves are killed, when livestock are injured or run through fencing—the impact is immediate and real.

It is financial. It is emotional. And it is heartbreaking.

The Wolf Management Compensation and Proactive Trust Fund exists for a reason. It provides compensation for confirmed losses and supports proactive measures to prevent conflict before it happens. But the challenge has always been funding. HB 4134 provides a dedicated, ongoing revenue source for that fund. Under the bill, a portion of the increased transient lodging tax—0.05 percent—will go directly to the Wolf Management Compensation and Proactive Trust Fund.

That means predictable funding. That means less uncertainty year to year. That means the ability to plan proactively instead of reacting in crisis mode. But this is not about choosing wolves over ranchers. And it is not about choosing ranchers over wildlife. It is about coexistence—and about recognizing that coexistence has costs. If Oregon is going to have wolves on the landscape—and that decision has been made—then Oregon also has a responsibility to the families whose livelihoods are directly affected.

HB 4134 is a modest increase in the state transient lodging tax, paid primarily by visitors staying overnight in our state. Those visitors come to enjoy Oregon's natural beauty—our wildlife, our open spaces, our landscapes. We have some of the most naturally beautiful spaces in this country in the very borders of this state. If we can't get the state to spend more on conservation—and we have tried. For years. Then we must find an alternate route. Increasing the state transient lodging tax is the only way we can fund conservation and have that revenue stream come mostly from out-of-state visitors.

Whereas I've had a majority of my constituents reach out who believe this increase is vital to our region, I've also heard from constituents who believe this increase will devastate their business or decrease tourism in Oregon. And after speaking with some of the larger events in my area, those folks don't believe that this increase will affect them in the slightest. If anything, they're

happy that this increase will directly benefit the folks and industries in our region. And they're going to need support.

This last weekend, I was informed that a new wolf pack, approximately 14 members, some collared had just traveled out of California and into the Klamath region. This pack is responsible for 38 confirmed depredations in California, has seemingly no fear of human presence, and even ran through the middle of rounding up cattle. When packs like this exist on the wrong side of Highway 395, the only support we can give our ranchers is through the Compensation and Proactive Trust fund.

HB 4134 strengthens this program by ensuring that nonlethal deterrence methods and tools are well funded and accessible. These measures fund range riders, fencing improvements, fladry, and other deterrence tools. And when those don't make a difference, like what I expect will happen with this new wolf pack in Klamath, it helps ensure that ranchers aren't ran out of house and home just because wolves crossed their property.

So, for everyone who is hesitant on supporting this bill, I hope you understand this: Wolves are coming. And they are coming to every rural district in this state.

I've been dealing with these calls for years—and it's heartbreaking when you must tell a rancher to believe and work with a system that has never supported them. Over the last few years, we've finally gotten to a place where this program can more adequately support our ranching communities—we just need to adequately fund it. This session, we have a chance to do just that.

For that reason, I urge your support of HB 4134.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby Henry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.